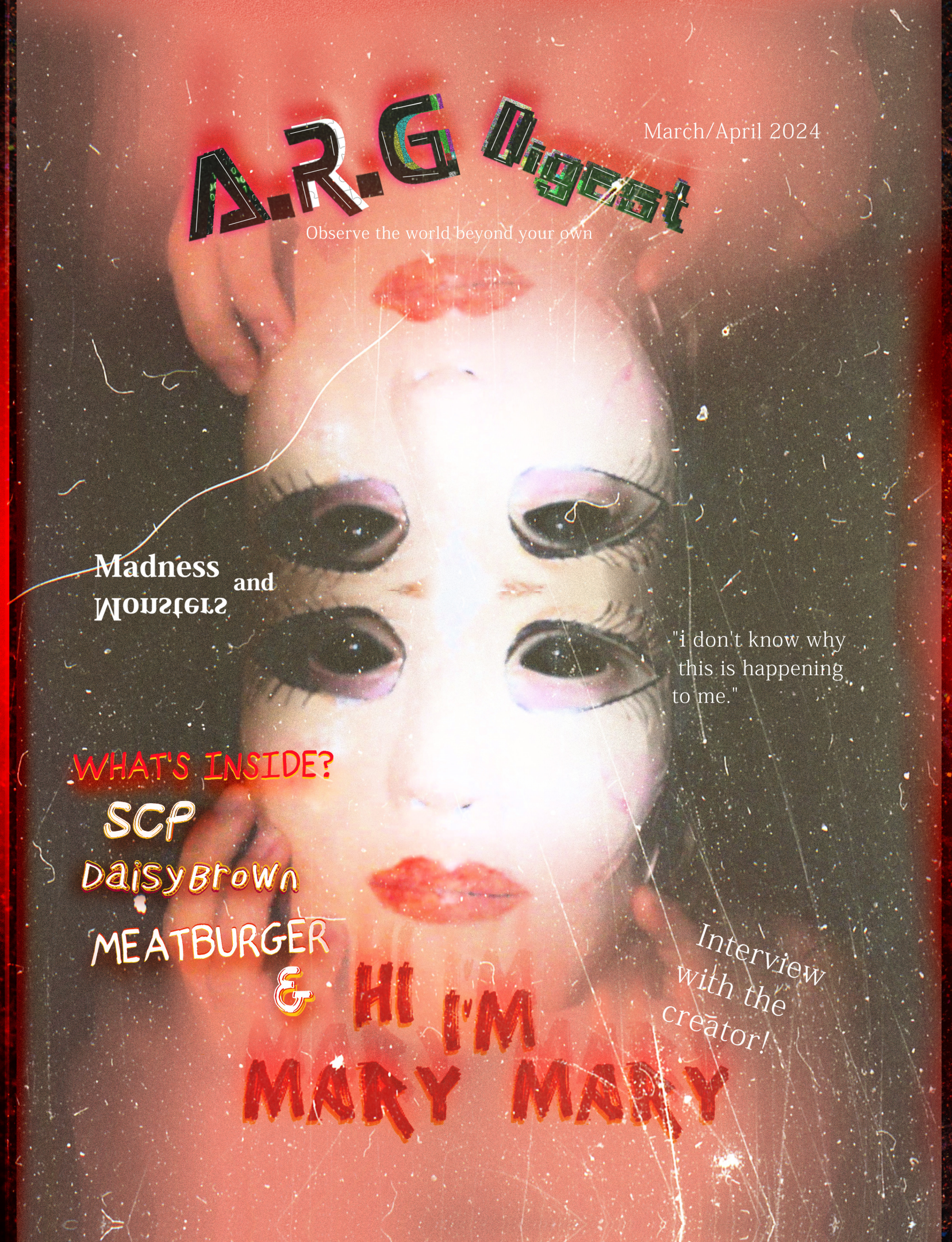
A.R.G Digest

March/April 2024

Observe the world beyond your own



Madness and Monsters

"i don't know why this is happening to me."

WHAT'S INSIDE?

SCP

DaisyBrown

MEATBURGER

& HI I'M MARY MARY

Interview with the creator!

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By Austeria

WHAT'S AN ARG?

So, what is an ARG and how does it differ from other web series? ARG stands for alternate reality game, and it is played rather than simply being watched. That isn't to say that one doesn't watch an ARG, but they don't always have to. The experience comes from the interaction with the characters and world, as pieces of that world can be touched, influenced and altered. The story follows along with the interaction, in a fourth-wall breaking gesture. This can come in the form of character interaction, puzzles (hidden or in plain sight) or other games that affect the story they are set in.

Unfiction is similar in nature, but follows a clear-cut narrative. One can enter this world, but their influence is very limited, in relation to the main plot. One may even have characters within this world, but they must be tied in with the predetermined storyline.

Both of these game-like story genres are an unique form of art that allow those experiencing the stories to become immersed in their worlds. They become a part of them, and make real connections to the characters and places. It is an intense art experience, unlike so many others. Most importantly, at their core, they are deep, heartfelt stories used to express what we have so much trouble expressing in our normal lives. Stories were born along with our thoughts at the dawn of man, following each and every step we took. They were our first love, and our first obsession. No matter one's age, class or ethnicity... It is the one great, unifying factor: Storytelling. No matter how broken our hearts may be, no matter how much we may have to endure in life, stories will always be there for us in a way that nothing else can be. They will dance with our hearts, and intertwine with our spirits, healing us when nothing else could ever hope to. Writings, plays, sculptures, paintings, videos, films—or whichever form they may take—these stories are more than a passion. They are humanity in the purest form. This is why I dedicate every available moment to these stories. My obsession extends beyond myself, beyond my cares, needs or reasoning. They are true freedom, they are unity, they are expression and they are the soul. The stories I share and tell are more of myself than this mortal shell could ever hope to be.

A Monster and a Gardener

Article by
Neil Daigle Orians

daisy brown

Series created by Julia Dapper

Like many other mysterious Internet horror projects, it is difficult to narrow down even a handful of themes that Daisy Brown could be "about." It's about queerness, it's about isolation and loneliness, it's about family, it's about storytelling itself.

If a singular theme had to be chosen as the backbone of Daisy's story, it would be an exploration of familial relationships through the lens of generational trauma. Alan is quite literally a monster of her father's creation, but also a symbol of his grief, anger, and conflicted feelings surrounding Daisy's existence. Daisy symbolizes the death of his wife – her existence, as Curtis sees it, required the death of her mother. Similar to how Daisy sees Alan as a lingering residue of her father's existence, Curtis is conflicted knowing that Daisy is his late wife's final creation.

"Daisy symbolizes the death of his wife – her existence"

He loves her and he resents her. He shuts her off from the outside world, both to protect her from harm as well as to punish her for existing.

In the penultimate video, Daisy dares Alan to kill her during a shouting match. When he hesitates to even act, she calls him pathetic and weak, knowing he fully depends upon her in order to live. An enraged Alan then throws her down into the basement, where Daisy is finally introduced to the other monsters of her father's creation.

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He shuts her off from the outside world, both to protect her from harm as well as to punish her for existing. In the penultimate video, Daisy dares Alan to kill her during a shouting match.

When he hesitates to even act, she calls him pathetic and weak, knowing he fully depends upon her in order to live. An enraged Alan then throws her down into the basement, where Daisy is finally introduced to the other monsters of her father's creation. The other monsters represent varying means of coping with loss and grief. Their existence shows us different ways that Curtis could have coped with the loss of his wife.

Lithop is the foil to Alan's cruelty. The other monsters refer to Alan as "the little one," implying that their current sizes and bodies were inherent to themselves. Alan grew thanks to Daisy's care, yet this led to him exploiting and abusing her. Daisy's care made him grow, and despite that care he continued to hate her very existence. Alan could never love and respect Daisy, as he was the embodiment of her father's grief and anger towards a child who did not choose to be born. He begrudgingly tolerated her, knowing that he needed her in some way. Similarly, Curtis needed Daisy as she was the last remnant of his late wife's existence. But he resented her for this. Lithop's kindness seems to symbolize an acceptance of one's situation while simultaneously desiring to change it for the better.

It is through Lithop that Daisy gains both courage and clear mind to break free of Alan's control and run away from her childhood home,

bringing Lithop with her. Daisy is terrified of Lithop at first, but Lithop does not hold this against her or even seem to flinch at her initial disgust and horror. The additional monsters were not a surprise to observant viewers, as their existence was foreshadowed a handful of times before their reveal, through YouTube's captioning system. Starting with the second video, At the zoo, viewers with the captions turned on will find a second narrative is being told within parentheses. The short video has no actual dialogue. The captions, however, give the viewer a poetic interpretation of what we are seeing. What could have simply been a curiosity and aesthetic exploration of captions later became a meta-text narrative, critically important for interpreting and understanding Daisy, the world she lives in, and the monsters that surround her.

"it is an expressive artwork made by a young artist that exists beyond the limitations..."

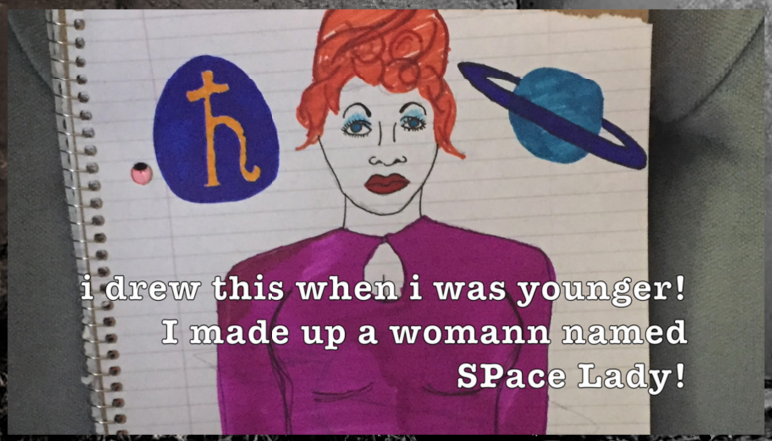
Time travel is also possible through these captions. We get glimpses of the past through undefined conversations between characters we never see on screen. The viewer is never told explicitly what they are reading. Through context and careful observation, we learn various details of Daisy's childhood, her parents, Curtis' work, and other aspects of the narrative. Foreshadowing is delivered with precision and intent, making Alan's abuse and the sudden reveal of more monsters in the basement feel intentional and not random endgame twists. Through captions, tongue-in-cheek references to YouTuber culture, and the play between the comments section and her descriptions, Dapper used YouTube not just as a platform, but as a material. Not unlike a series of brushstrokes, she manipulated its inherent properties as she saw fit to paint Daisy's story. Daisy Brown was not the first project to use captions like this, nor is it the last, but this particular usage of captioning, as well as the queered sense of time that results, gives the project an unique and fascinating media-specificity.

In Notes From Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture, Stephen Duncombe discusses the trap of "representation" in media and art. For marginalized experiences, representation is simply a facade used to placate while profiting off those same experiences and identities. All the while, our sense of self is directly tied to this media. We make sense of our world and construct our identities, in significant measure, out of the physical and cultural materials that surround us… these things become an integral part of who we are. In our age of mass consumption, more and more of this stuff is produced not by us but for us, not according to the logic of community tradition or individual inspiration, but according to the pecuniary rationale of the market. The result is a historical separation between us, as individuals, and the entertainment and products we use, enjoy, and derive meaning from. In brief: we are alienated from what we consume.

Daisy Brown's political power doesn't come from a grandiose statement against capitalism – it is an expressive artwork made by a young artist that exists beyond the limitations of other more formal modes of storytelling, creating an alternative to the artwork-as-commodity relationship we are comfortable with. Like other projects in unfiction, it is an example of what happens when basic tools for making are given to an industrious creator who has a story to tell. Daisy Brown is absurd; It's silly, and it's crunchy. It is also moving, heartbreaking, and unsettling. YouTube, as both platform and material, provided Dapper a means to express a personally resonant experience using horror and monsters as an allegory for abuse and neglect. Unlike galleries and film festivals, the internet does not have gatekeeping in the form of curators and selection committees. Dapper cited other DIY projects made by young and self-funded creators like Alan Tutorials, Marble Hornets, and EverymanHybrid as inspiration for her own online interactive narrative. It is through those projects that she was essentially given permission to create, and as such gave others permission through her own work.

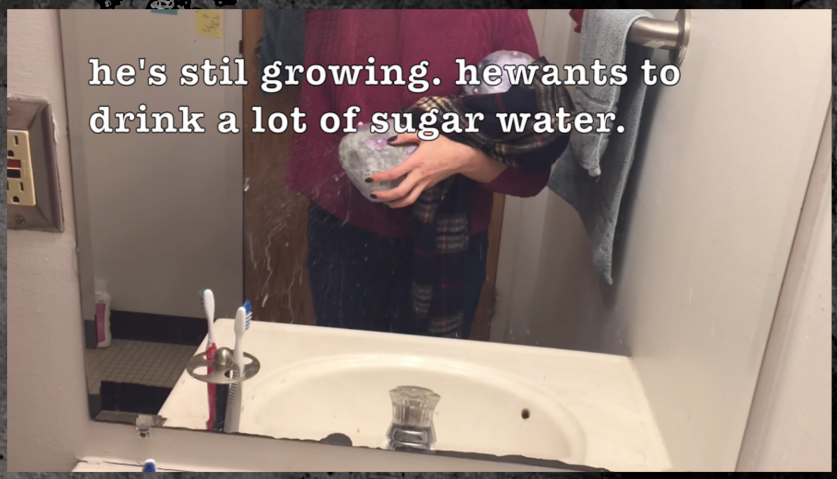
1 Duncombe, Stephen. 2008.
Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture.
2nd ed. Bloomington, IN: Microcosm Publishing.

IMAGES FROM daisy brown



Creators Twitter "X" account
https://twitter.com/_JCDapper
Creators Youtube
https://www.youtube.com/@julesdapper5584

Series created
by Julia Dapper


he's stil growing. hewants to
drink a lot of sugar water.

(the silence of longing)

The SCP Foundation wiki, a collaborative "open source" writing project, has a bit of a mythic status on the internet. Beholden to no particular canon and with an extremely wide user base, the creativity and variation of the writing is near boundless, and it's hard to find an internet savvy fan of science fiction and the supernatural that has not at least heard of it or is familiar with the term or concept of an SCP. Boasting over ten thousand entries and hundreds of authors, and varying wildly in permutations of beings and objects that can be considered paranormal, the sprawling wiki can be intimidating to newcomers or, alternatively, an irresistible embarrassment of riches in the form of a mammoth bestiary that will keep the reader feasting for months upon months.

So, with the newcomer in mind, what is an SCP? SCP stands for Special Containment Procedures, referring to the efforts of the SCP foundation to identify, research and,(when possible and necessary) bring these "anomalous" objects under "lock and key." As stated in the Guide for Newcomers, the world of the SCP Foundation is "based around the premise that… in essence, magic is real." The SCPs break or ignore the rules of currently explored science. Psionics, Ancient Gods, machines that come to life – anything and everything that cannot be explained and affects our world is of interest to the Foundation.

SCP has a second meaning, the motto of the Foundation: Secure, Contain, Protect. For the sake of the safety of all, the Foundation acts independently and above all jurisdictions. All major governments of the world have given authority to the Foundation in its mission - "the task of containing anomalous objects, entities, and phenomena." This is not only to protect humanity from the vast array of dangers many SCPs embody (from deadly interactions with humans to bending reality to a full on apocalypse) but also to protect the individual and collective psyche of society which might be easily fractured when confronted with the knowledge of such anomalies existing.

"SCPs embody (from deadly interactions with humans to bending reality to a full on apocalypse)"

While, as mentioned before, there is no official canon the wiki is beholden to, there are several connected stories, creatures and arcs that connect and sometimes cross over. There are currently 38 listed on the canon hub page, as well as even more "unmaintained" canons (canons without a dedicated custodian,) allowing for a rich "series" experience. From "The Coldest War" detailing the Foundation's efforts and influence affecting the capitalist vs communist when the Foundation goes into hiding, to "Dread and Circuses," where sideshow attraction illusions are anything but. The canons are incredibly varied and bursting with imagination. But for those authors who want ultimate freedom to forge their own path, it is perfectly fine for their work to contradict other, previous entries or canons. It is just considered separate from the established canons. So how should a reader approach this smorgasbord of fiction? There is a link to pull up a random SCP entry, which I availed to myself a few times when researching this article.

One of my favorites supplied to me by this method was SCP-5928, a mechanic whose tinkering projects come to life, much to his own distress.

The entry is written from the perspective of one of these "children," who give him the name "FATHER." Before being secured by the Foundation, "FATHER" was being contained within his own home by the now living machines, fed antidepressants and kept from the world at large and all harm by his "blessed children." Full of delightful pun-like plays on words in the form of the machines perceiving the names as misspelt versions of what machine they happen to be, like "Brother Ares Condisher" and "Sister Tee Vee." While FATHER pleads with the Foundation agents and staff to keep his creations away from him, the creations themselves attempt to break him out to "free" him. This is a type of absurd situational humor that speaks to me, as this quote I hope illustrates well: "Brother Try-Sicle was the closest to freeing Father from the clutches of our jailers. He would have been successful if he had noticed the rocket launcher a bit earlier. Rest in peace, Try-Sicle, your sacrifice has not been forgotten."

"One of my favorites supplied to me by this method was SCP-5928, a mechanic whose tinkering projects come to life"

Another method of selecting entries to read that I particularly enjoyed was browsing the art galleries. See a particularly striking image that draws you in? Just click the link and you are directed to the SCP the artist depicted.

Being an apocalyptic-minded creator with a healthy appreciation of thalassophobia and the titans of the deep that help inspire it, I was immediately drawn to a piece of artwork simulating a frame of footage from what can be assumed to be the front camera of a deep sea submersible.

A giant maw embedded in the ocean floor, slightly reminiscent of a Sarlaac Pit from Star Wars or an open mouth of a Dune sandworm (but sans teeth,) surrounded by coral with another submersible in the frame.

Clicking the link, this turned out to be "the dorsal surface of SCP-6013." SCP-6013 is "an intelligent Sarkic war leviathan," a biologically-based massive ship of a supernatural cult known as Sarkicism. At an estimated over three thousand years old and nestled in the ocean floor, its vein-like extremities have spread miles into the coast, accessing the aquifers of eastern and central Europe and Asia. Within its mighty "lungs" lie enough poisoned material that, if "exhaled" into these veins, would "terraform" the environment and alter or kill millions upon millions. A multi-kilometer radius of the ocean surrounding it has been poisoned, and all organisms within have become a part of its being, including two sperm whales who do its bidding. The entry is vast, telling the tale of its discovery and the lives lost and forever altered by their interactions with it. With her.

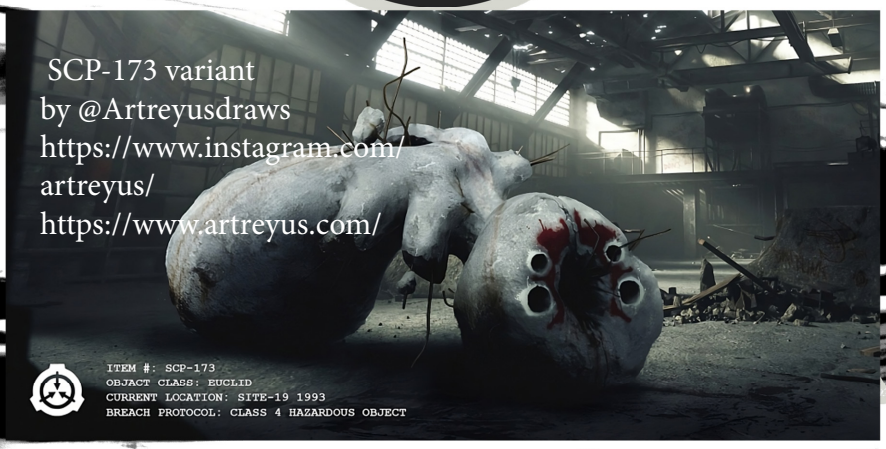
Including audio recordings and a whole other language to decipher via multiple choice (drop down options in the transcripts) it is a breathtaking and chilling piece of fiction, as well as a fantastic example of the more complex branching and interconnecting entries of the wiki.

From dark comedy to existential dread, these are just two examples of the over ten thousand entries. It's not hard to see why the SCP Foundation wiki has utterly captivated its fans for over fifteen years. Steeped in detailed lore and a variety that would make an entire pick 'n mix candy store blush, it has everything you could need to face the deep waters of your darkest fears. Dive in and relish their all-encompassing embrace of blackness.

Article by
Lili Ardat

Parabooks
Image by
DR. Dan

IMAGES FROM SCP Foundation



SCP-173 variant
by @Artreyusdraws
https://www.instagram.com/artreyus/
https://www.artreyus.com/

SCP-6542
by Steph Lynch
https://twitter.com/anafabulaic

SCP 6500
by Amai-Ixchel
https://twitter.com/Ixchel_la_luna
https://www.artstation.com/ixchel_martinez_v

All creators mentioned socials
"SCP-6013" by Rhys Tanner
https://twitter.com/ASwarmOBees

"FATHER/SCP-5928" by Nickthebrick1
https://www.wikidot.com/user:info/nickthebrick1

Viatorem Caeruleus: The Eldritch Artist from the Stars
by Malebeja
https://twitter.com/Malebeja1
https://www.deviantart.com/malebeja

SCP-5790
by Karathh
https://twitter.com/karath-huuuun

SCP-5001
by AnAnomalousWriter
https://twitter.com/Anoma-lousWriter

Artwork by Valdevia

https://twitter.com/Valdevia_Art
https://valdevia.art/

Series Created by
Co- Creator Zemphes Co-creator sealtoast

MEATBURGER

Why is it that problems are easier to process when they aren't ours? Have you noticed that? When observing someone going through a hard time it seems all too easy to pick up on their struggles and come to a resolution. You may or may not be correct when it comes to that assumption, but you can identify the problem and form a solution regardless.

When you are struggling with something yourself, oftentimes you don't know what is wrong until it has completely overtaken you. At that point, a resolution seems completely out of reach. Could it be for this very reason that we create embodiments for our problems? Demons that represent our troubles, so that we can get a better look at them from the outside and find a solution. What about cryptids and other creatures of legend? Are Wendigos and Skinwalkers embodiments of our fears or lack of knowledge about what could potentially be stalking us out in nature?

Given this context, most or all of the urban legends are real—but is that the whole of it? Are they just pieces of ourselves turned monstrous to reflect the intensity and severity of our struggles? Or could it be that such struggles are a reflection of a world beyond our own? A world veiled to those who are not synced to it through these negative aspects of the mind. As the allegory of 'Plato's cave' argues, everything in this life could be but a shadowy projection of what is truly going on in the world (and worlds) surrounding our one known mode of existence. 'Meatburger' is an expertly crafted thinkpiece on this very matter.

Our protagonist 'Lu' is plagued by hallucinations both auditory and visual. What started primarily as vivid dreams of warped worlds and shadowy creatures has begun to bleed into the waking world. The more sleep Lu loses the more encounters with these creatures they start to experience. Lu attempts to get help from a place called the Redcor Clinic, but the dreams and auditory hallucinations continue.

"Our protagonist 'Lu' is plagued by hallucinations both auditory and visual."

Things take a turn for the worse when something from one of Lu's dreams connects to something real, bridging the two 'worlds' indubitably. In the dream, Lu finds a baby doll's head with a strange symbol drawn on the forehead. Its split mouth contains a letter that gives Lu login information for a YouTube channel. Upon awakening, Lu tries to log into the YouTube channel, and it works. The channel (coincidentally called Meatburger) is filled with various unlisted and strange videos describing some sort of parasite and visions of Hell from behind the veil. It also mentions some sort of "deity of rot" more ancient than the gods of old, and how the creatures from Lu's visions are connected to them as a servant. It then mentions how Lu is special, calling them by name.

Lu can't handle all of this and quickly shuts down the webpage, but the whispering voice from the video continues. It tells Lu that a being known as 'the Nightboy' is coming for them and it's going to take their flesh, causing Lu to spiral further into their hysteria. Unfortunately, this is precisely what the entity wanted. It feeds off of the fear and confusion, expanding the delusion.

Lu practices counting down from ten to calm themself and continues to take the medicine prescribed by the clinic, and it does help somewhat, but the visions only grow stronger as the 'hauntings' keep Lu in a constant state of paranoia and misery. The voice teases Lu, showing them trees at night and saying "The nightboys are very good at hiding. You almost didn't see them until I pointed them out." I personally didn't see anything… but then again, I might have. I had to ask myself if I was hallucinating due to the voice's suggestions. This is exactly what the voice wants. If Lu doesn't know what's real and what isn't, they will never be able to grip reality and recover.

Lu calls the clinic, and explains the current situation. The staff member tells Lu that they are simply losing their grip on reality and that none of this could possibly be real. Following up by asking Lu if they are taking their prescribed medication, having assumed they are simply having a schizophrenic episode. Lu becomes frustrated and enraged. It's clear that the clinic can't help them with their current predicament. At least not until their next scheduled appointment.

> "The nightboys are very good at hiding. You almost didn't see them until I pointed them out."

Out of aid resources, Lu returns to the YouTube channel to seek out answers there. This time, the voice informs Lu that the videos themselves are living beings that feed upon the fears and negative emotions of those that observe them. The voice also mentions the use for the parasite, which by this point has been observed by Lu.

Series Youtube
https://youtube.com/@thisismeatburger
Creators Twitter "X"
Co- Creator Zemphes:
https://x.com/Zemphes
Co-creator sealtoast:
https://x.com/sealtoast

It is a massive black creature with an elongated body and writhing tendrils. It is a nightmare that will inhabit Lu's skin (like it had done with others) to create a new type of Nightmare (a living demonic embodiment of human fear and negative emotions) to take revenge on the gods that abandoned them—whoever 'they' are. The voice also warns Lu that if they don't allow this to happen then they will be sacrificed during the (yet to be explained) Eulacram Tribute, but in this new state of being they can survive and serve a greater purpose.

Lu attempts to avoid this possession for some time, but in episode 6 'The Experience' the darkness works its way into Lu. For now, it lies dormant but beckons for Lu to give into it to make all of the suffering stop. The temptation is unreal, but somehow Lu remains in control.

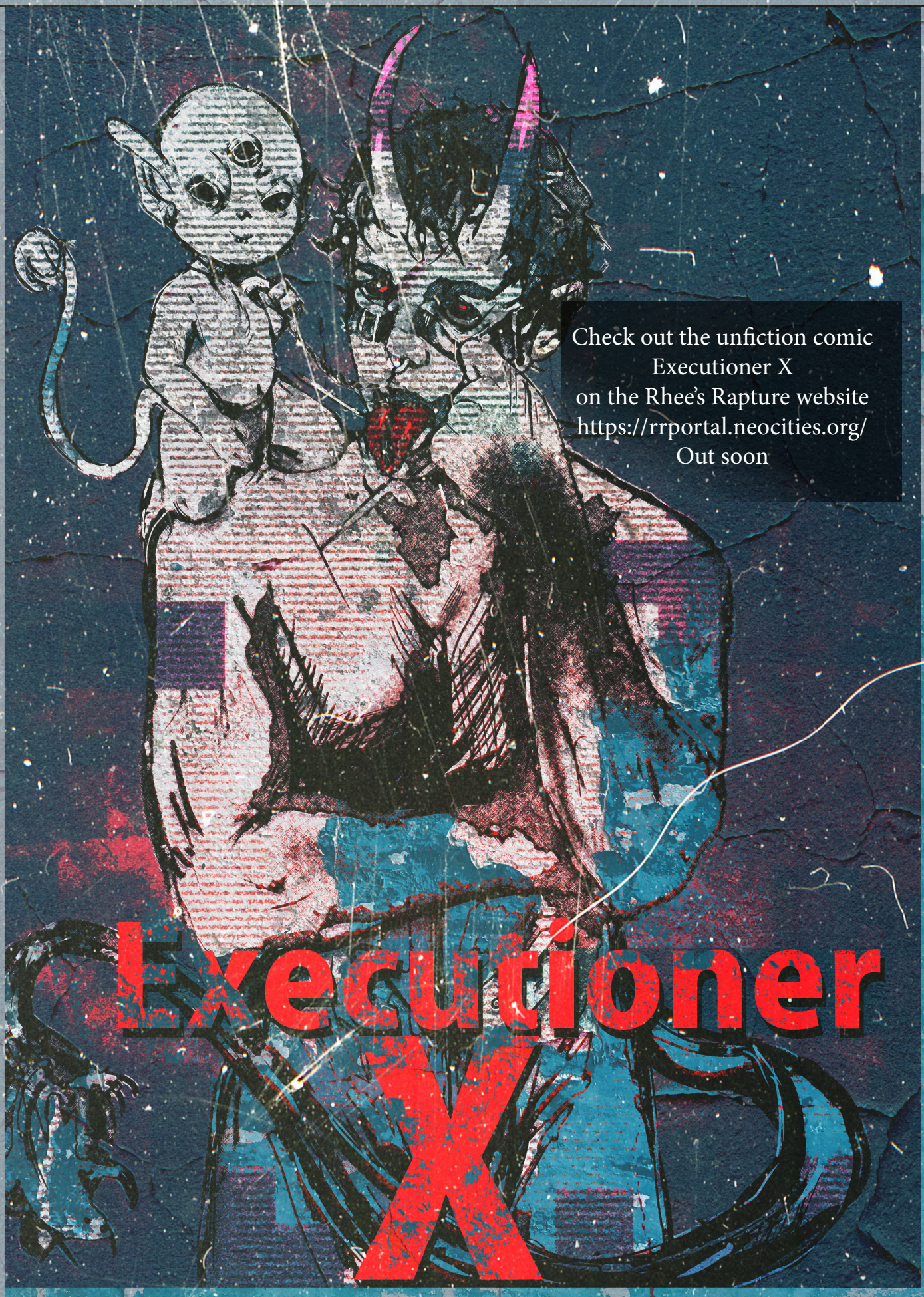
The final 4 episodes open many new doors, including the introduction to two other 'dreamers' who seem to be trapped in the same predicament. The three of them are being hunted by something unseen in this dream, Lu included. We also see the appearance of several alternate instances of Lu. Different versions of them, all appearing in the same area and vanishing before spotting one another. This series is ongoing, however, and I highly recommend jumping on now while things are still heating up! Again, this series crafts an excellent thinkpiece regarding what is and isn't real, and how someone affected by mental illness might have trouble differentiating the two. It delves deep into the perils of paranoia and the frustrations that come with it. If you or someone you know is suffering with hallucinations, be sure to find help that takes your (or their) concerns seriously.

Article by
G.P Reeds

IMAGES
FROM
MEATBURGER

Artwork by
HACKTPLANET_
https://twitter.com/HACKT-
PLANET_
MEATBURGER

JUMPING ON THE BED,
ONE FELL OFF AND LOST HER HEAD,
NOW THERE IS ONE LITTLE MONKEY
JUMPING ON THE BED.
SILENT SCREAMING
GASP


Check out the unfiction comic
Executioner X
on the Rhee's Rapture website
https://rrportal.neocities.org/
Out soon
Executioner
X

WE NEED TO GET ON THIS. LOOK AT ALL THIS PAPERWORK. YOU HAVE WAY MORE WRITE-UPS THAN THE AVERAGE SERIAL KILLER, ASSHOLE.
I WAS AN EXECUTIONER... BESIDES.... EVIL ACTS DO NOT EQUATE TO SOME TYPE OF CREDIT DOWN HERE? YOU'RE A DEMON AFTER ALL.
THAT IS A MISCONCEPTION. JUST BECAUSE I AM A DEMON DOES NOT MEAN I'M INHERENTLY EVIL.
I AM A BOOKKEEPER, AND I HELP CLASSIFY WHERE THE DAMNED SHOULD BE PROCESSED. I WAS SUMMONED, AND A DEAL WAS MADE. AND YOU, BIG MAN, BETTER LISTEN TO ME AND NOT GIVE ME ANY ATTITUDE.
LET'S GET STARTED. ARE YOU READY TO REVEAL THE PAST?

EXECUTIONER

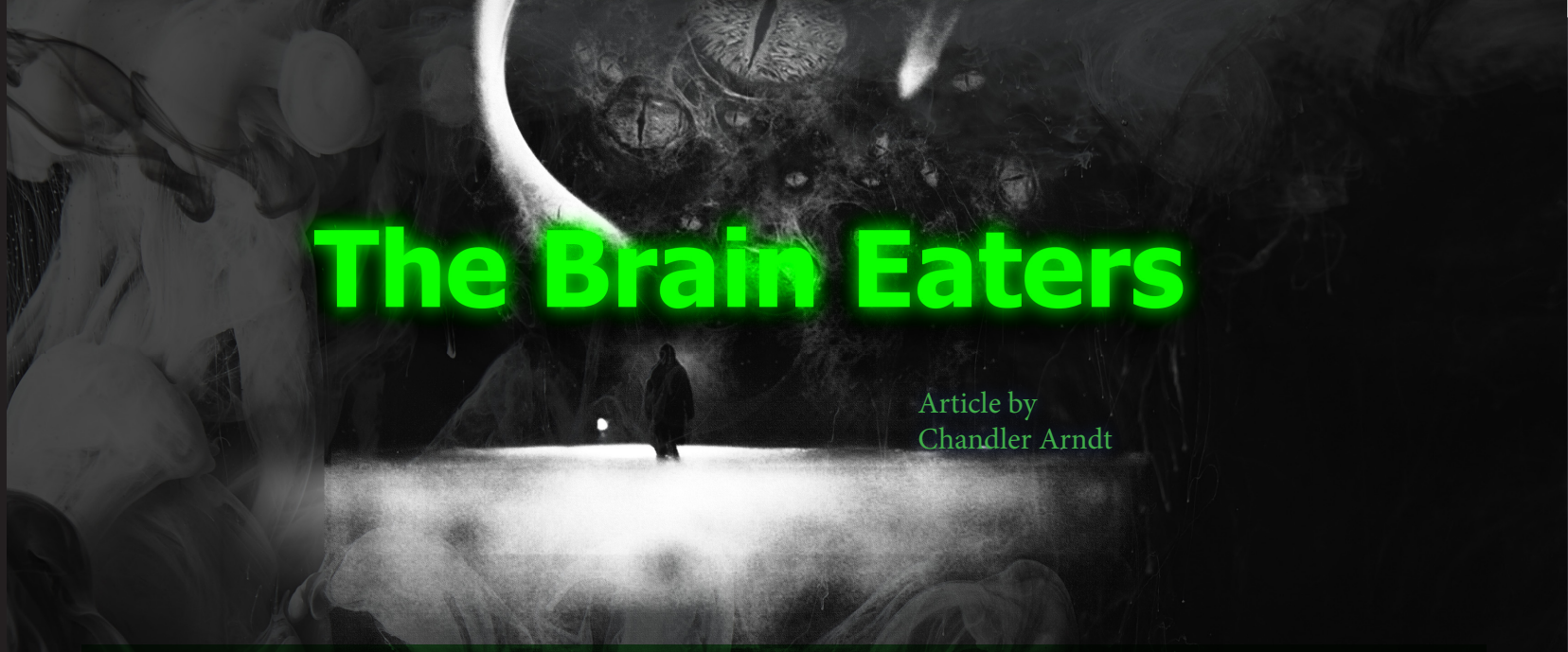
Art/series
Created by Austeria

In 1927, elements in the American government considered it necessary to create a secret governing body dedicated to protecting America and its allies from paranormal threats, and the paranormal from those who would harm it. With the help of the existing Canadian paranormal agency, the United States Office for the Preservation of Normalcy was founded.

This is the story of the OPN.

The Office for the Preservation of Normalcy is an interactive fiction universe run on Tumblr. Check us out, submit questions to our friendly social media staff, and enjoy the mystery and humor.

Look up "preservationofnormalcy" on tumblr and check our pinned post.



The Brain Eaters

Article by
Chandler Arndt

The 'I am Sophie" ARG (2020) was infamous for its trailhead in February 2020: a viral YouTube channel trailer video with near-universal backlash. A rich, blonde young woman named Sophie shows off her mansion, Lamborghini and private jet - a luxurious life paid for using her dad's money.

And then she has the absolute gall to wonder if she is "being real" while promoting her upcoming vlog series.

> "The immersive online storytelling version of Spider-Sense is activated."

People hated this video for two main reasons: First (and more subtle) the video exists to promote a vlog channel that didn't exist yet. So the end card of the first video also listing coming-soon merchandise and custom social media handles out the gate is suspicious. The immersive online storytelling version of Spider-Sense is activated.

Second (and more obvious) it felt tasteless to flaunt such apparently extravagant wealth. "Sophie" was only the latest of an ecosystem of similar, tacky vloggers at the time who continued to prove that clout has a price tag but wisdom does not.

When Sophie's mystery reveals itself, through a few video frames of a stranger, Sophie seeks this stranger out and the plot continues from there. This isn't a dedicated review of that project, but it struck a nerve with its audience. And Sophie's monster feeds both on those nerves and the rest of the brains that come with them. This is only one notorious example of a larger focus by ARG creators on psychological horror. "I am Sophie" is not even necessarily a turning point that caused that focus.

My previous article "The Monster is the Camera" emphasized how much Slenderman web series and Unfiction projects used these themes. And they aren't unique for doing this. The "Daisy Brown" web series (2017-2018) features the fantastic drama of a young woman raising an abusive plant-monster and agonizing over her familial affection for the monster. "Hiimmary-mary" (2016-2020) is a similar ARG about a young woman trapped with her worst fears inside a copy of her old family home. The Rake was an early creepypasta monster that haunts people while they sleep.

Predecessors like the novel "House of Leaves" (2000) and the video game "Silent Hill 2" (2001) place significant focus on their characters, their hopes and fears, their hallucinations and fantasies. Ring's (1998) cursed videotape was a prototype for a type of the paranoid "share the curse or die" horror creepypasta, regardless of the quality of its imitators. Freddy Krueger has been haunting your dreams since the 1980s.

Even further back, immersive cosmic horror stories like Frank Belknap Long's "The Hounds of Tindalos" (1946) feature a character taking a mental journey through time and space… and returning with monsters on his heels.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" offers similar haunted house vibes and connects that horror to explicit mental health themes as early as 1892. These stories' epistolary frameworks - including newspaper clippings, reports, and diary entries - are just a few among the aesthetic heritage of contemporary ARGs.

Fame, Slenderman, Alan, The Veiled Lady, The Ash Tree Lane House, the Hounds - no physical threat from them is as scary as the power to get into your head. They might not try to murder you physically, but they can do so much worse. Curiosity warps into obsession. Obsession means time and effort wasted, relationships torn apart. A big, empty world with no one in it but you.

These characters thrive on the psychological resources of their human victims. Fear is only the most obvious. Rage, loneliness, despair, grief—and they are not just currency, they are food. Or, even worse, this psychic harm is a byproduct, a side effect of the greater threat they offer as villains. It is an universal and visceral vulnerability for humans: that your mind is not entirely your own. The high school English topic of "fate versus free will" is an abstraction until your brain has thoughts you don't want to have.

Of course, some monsters aren't satisfied with just psychological resources. EverymanHYBRID's (2010-2018) resident possessive monster HABIT puts on airs of a larger plan, but he makes a confusing contest for players. The series ends with breaking down his unwilling roommate Vinny enough to kill the body that HABIT has been inhabiting.

The "Why So Serious" ARG (2007-2008) promoting The Dark Knight turned the players into henchmen for the Joker.

"Lasagna Cat" (2008, 2017) features a version of Jon Arbuckle who is so desperate for attention that he reads four and a half hours of sex survey results, before he enters a reincarnation fever dream.

A wide variety of SCPs are called "cognitohazards" because of their impact on the Foundation researchers, but that's one trait among their wide variety of anomalies.

Writers invoke similar mental health language when they describe artificial intelligence tools as "hallucinating."

"These characters thrive on the psychological resources of their human victims."

With a brain to call your own comes an identity. How can a character know who they are when a monster controls every part of their life? If they can't know that, how can they hope to trust their allies? Good depictions can promote empathy for the characters instead of fear of the monster.

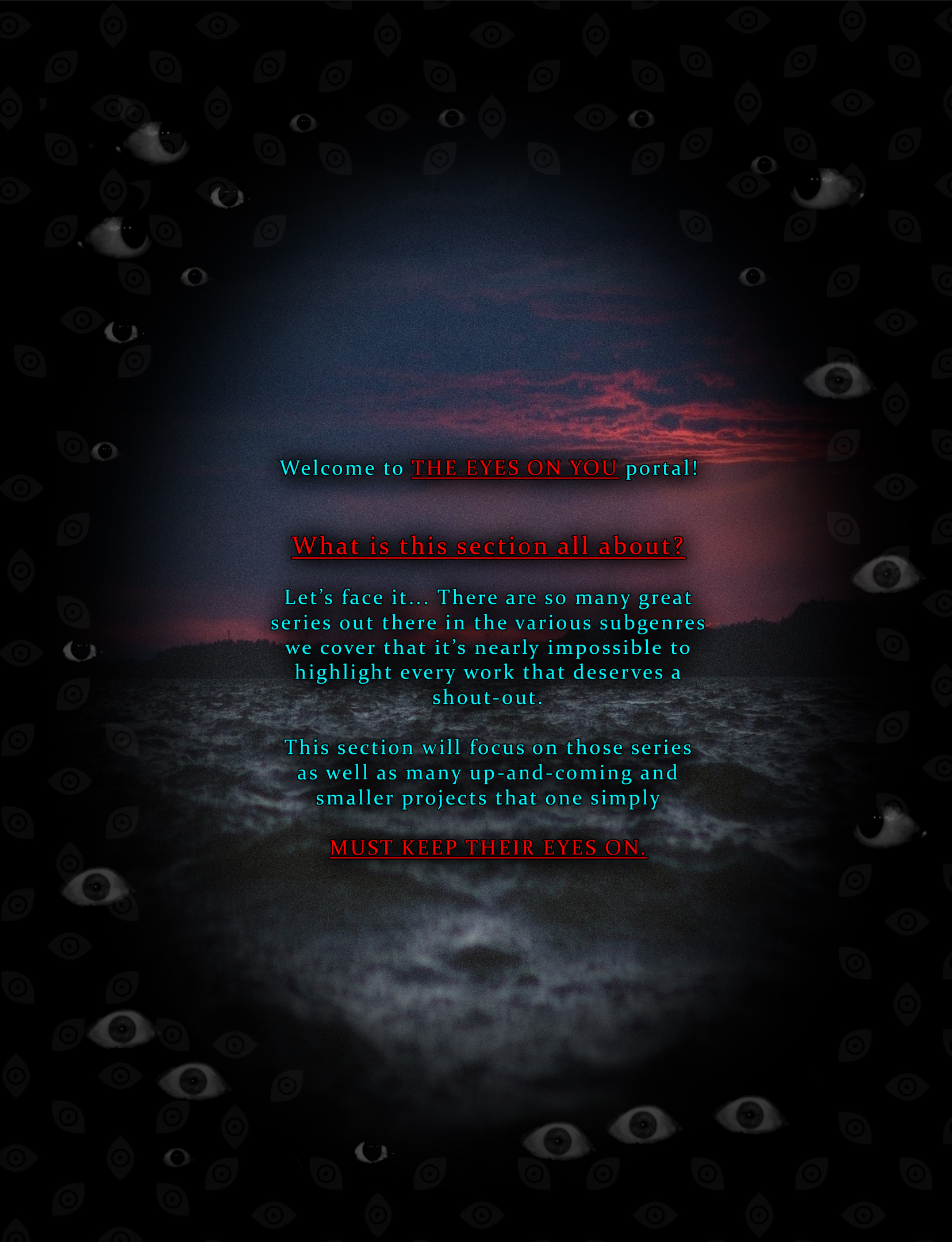
When a game master needs dramatic stakes but can't - and doesn't want to - hurt themselves or the audience, psychological horror offers a potent shock instead.

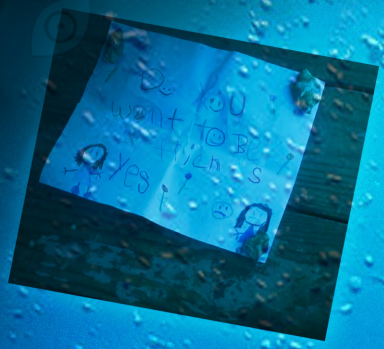
In non-immersive games, a scary face on the screen is often a sign of a lose condition: the player has been caught by the monster, entered some inescapable trap, or is moving out of bounds. For example, ARGs (which are sometimes international projects due to the internet's reach) can't rely on such an obvious play area and must offer feedback themselves when a player is progressing towards the next solution.

Projects like these explore our fears. They're shared stories that reveal the everyday unknowable. They turn a scary place into a face. The monsters scare us just as much with what we know about them just as much as with what we don't know.

Players and game masters share an alternate reality, a space full of impossible things. When we love them, all they ask in return is our brains.

Article by
Chandler Arndt


Welcome to THE EYES ON YOU portal!
What is this section all about?
Let's face it... There are so many great series out there in the various subgenres we cover that it's nearly impossible to highlight every work that deserves a shout-out.
This section will focus on those series as well as many up-and-coming and smaller projects that one simply
MUST KEEP THEIR EYES ON.



Flower of the Veil

Lorelai is a girl that lives in a shiny dreamscape called the Veil, spending endless days filming the forest - alone except for her friend Flower. The second video shows that the Veil exists alongside the real world, and Lorelai has been missing from the real world for a long time. When she hears whispers from the other side of a bridge she has been told not to cross, she leaves a note for her visitor and receives a tape of the real world in exchange.

The short videos in this YouTube series (about 10 minutes total) are quiet and slow in a peaceful way.
Readers will be quick to recognize the white-text-on-black-background exposition, the creepy children's drawings, the woodsy setting from Slenderman vlogs. The "inexperienced person in a horror setting" vibes from projects like Alantutorial and Daisy Brown are on full display. If you liked the second half of the "hiimmarymary" ARG when she discovers her Garden, you'll like this webseries' aesthetic.

YouTube channel:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTeqmGX3f7H-R7Yac2_a3JA

information and image selection by Chandler Arndt

page design by G.P Reeds

Stan Frederick

This is a monster-hunting show. Much like how similar ghost hunters follow their calling after a ghost haunts them. "Stan Frederick" the project was originally a Slenderman vlog and rebooted itself into a character study.
Stan explores, finds new monsters and old favorites, and gets rid of them. It uses the monster-of-the-week story structure you might find in a ghost-hunting show as well.

It's a YouTube series split into three seasons and a companion Twitter account. Its third season was, ironically enough, corrupted into finished scenes and dramatic narration due to a crashed hard drive.
The series takes full advantage of its vlog format and the necessary perspective-taking to get you to like Stan. If you like the classic Slenderman webseries, the Paranormal Paranoids ARG, or YouTube indie horror in general, you'll really like "Stan Frederick". The creator Valeria Santiago also has a lot of video essays and shorter video projects on bonus YouTube channels.

YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/@StanFrederick

Twitter:
https://twitter.com/StanFredericko

information and image selection by Chandler Arndt

page design by G.P Reeds

DITHER IN THE DARK

Dither in the Dark is presented in a "choose your own adventure" format. Billed as "Nostalgic adventures where you decide what happens next," it begins with a man in a mask seen lying in bed. (Or perhaps instead of a man in a mask, the mask is the face of a monster or demon?) He feels the earth shake and wakes, sitting up and playfully breaking the fourth wall as he stares directly into the camera. The viewers are presented with a choice. Should he go outside and investigate? Or head into the kitchen for a snack? In this opening episode, the midnight-munchie-minded viewers won the vote. So in the next episode our protagonist heads into the kitchen, confronting two roaches on the floor. He calls the roaches freeloaders and warns them they had better have left some food for him to eat. The roaches assure him they would never be so thoughtless as to eat everything, and the viewers are presented with another choice: what should he eat?
A moldy biscuit? Soggy lemon? Maybe a tomato with a bite taken out of it? As of the time of this writing, the voting is still open.

Served up with humor, an eerie yet playful chiptune soundtrack and plenty of direct interaction to control the fate of our man/monster, this one is quite delightful in its whimsy and is just getting started. Jump in now to decide what he eats and does next. (Vote for the soggy lemon!)

TikTok:
https://www.tiktok.com/@ditherinthedark

information and image selection by Lili Ardat

page design by G.P Reeds

Interview With Hi I'm Mary Mary Creator K

Interviewed by G.p Reeds

When considering where the lines between the paranormal and the trials of mentality overlap, there are few stories that compare to the delightfully macabre and intriguing tale presented in the webseries, Hi I'm Mary Mary. From entities that represent despair and depression to the conceptualization of isolation and anxiety portrayed through Mary being locked within an alternate version of her parents' home, the intricacies of the human mind are expanded upon and delved into from an angle most wouldn't dare approach it from. Taking a break from diving into our own minds, let's dive into the mind of the creator of the series herself!

What got you into the art of storytelling? Was it something you were always drawn to?

I've always loved storytelling. Even when I was very little, I would read books and watch movies all the time. One of the things I liked doing as a kid was creating little characters with my toys. I would set up their lives and tell these big epics with them. Even concerning the media I consumed (whether it was comics, books or movies) I loved being able to share a story that my peers could become interested in as well. I would concoct these "LARPS" though I guess you couldn't really consider them LARPS when they were made by a first grader. We were just playing pretend really. Within this though, I always loved being able to string together a narrative. I loved creating these worlds and characters that people could inhabit and explore. As I got older, I continued to love storytelling, because I realized just how much people can get from stories. They learn so much about other types of people and also about themselves. They can escape into a story if they need to. They can achieve another level of enlightenment that wouldn't have been possible without encountering the things they did within that story realm. Stories have a lot of power and impact.

Did you go into Hi I'm Mary Mary with any prior editing skills?

I had basic editing knowledge from classes and just messing around with editing software, but a lot of it was just learning as I went. I hadn't done any special effects prior, so a lot of it was just me pressing random buttons to see what things looked like and refining those things once I found an effect I liked.

Going into your inspirations, not exclusively for Hi I'm Mary Mary but in general, what inspires you the most?

I like to characterize my inspiration as a machine that does not stop. It is fueled by any sort of creative work. It doesn't matter what it is. My dad describes it as 'having smoke coming out of my ears' when I'm in a very creative mindset. Everything just starts whirring and I start going. I'll get an idea in the middle of watching some movie, and I'll tell myself in my internal dialog "Not now, I'm trying to watch this movie!" but I'll have to jot whatever it is down so I don't forget it. I would say this happens most often with movies and music. With music in particular, a singular line will sometimes resonate with me or the feeling I get listening to a song will. Sometimes, these ideas are completely unrelated to what inspired me. It's the aesthetic or the moment that hits something within me, and I get all of these ideas that flutter around my head and I have to just grab something and develop it.

Do you think you could flourish in a vacuum setting? For example, someone gives you access to a computer or hands you a piece of paper and tells you to make something.

I'm not sure about that. I could pull from my experiences and how I'm feeling, but I'm not sure I could create something on a broad scale without inspiration. It would take some time and existing. If I was given access to my notepad while in this vacuum then I know I could. Creativity is inherently generated by other human creativity. I have a very creative day job, and from this, I know there is a level of creativity that flourishes with moderate limits. My old job had a lot more restrictions and rules and it was a lot harder to be creative that way. When you are trusted with your level of creativity, and only given a few limits, you can do fairly well. On the other hand, creativity without any limits can result in you not generating anything. You don't have as much to go off of. That's where I become unsure about creating in a full-on vacuum. You need to build a boat before jumping into the water.

Why do you believe that people personify fears and trauma into entities so often in horror?

It's hard to explain what someone is going through inside their head. A being with a behavior is much easier to understand and conquer than a thought. Again, it's all about understanding ourselves and each other.

What piqued your interest in the darker side of art?

I've been into the spooky stuff since forever. As a little girl, I would go with my dad to Blockbuster, and I would wander into the horror section just to stare at all of the movie covers. In particular, I remember looking at the DVD cover of The Grudge. I was really scared of her. I would unblinkingly stare at the girl on the cover and try to overcome my fear of her.

I think the reason I've always been drawn to horror is because it is very exciting to me. Not only is it an exciting and thrilling look into these dark worlds, but it lets you explore them safely. It's a controlled type of fear that allows you to examine things you otherwise couldn't. I'm a person who is very anxious, and horror sort of gives me a bit of control over fear. Fear can warp perspectives and cause people to believe outlandish things. It can be used as a tool to control people. Having some control over fear is very important, and I believe horror helps us to do that.

Horror is a genre that helps us explore empathy as well. Through watching people suffer and go through things, we can learn to understand their perspectives and relate with them in a way that can only be obtained through some form of experience. Again, this is a safe way we can explore such things, things we may have never explored otherwise.

Creators socials

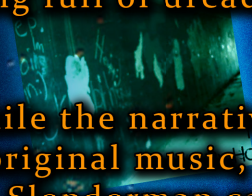
Youtube
https://www.youtube.com/@hiimmarymary923

Series Twitter "X"
https://twitter.com/hithereiammary
Creator Youtube
https://www.youtube.com/@k.6068

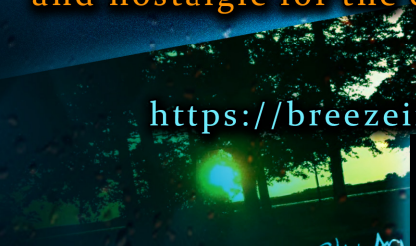
Creator Twitter
https://twitter.com/dash_k_dot

Breeze in Monochrome NIGHT

"Breeze in Monochrome NIGHT" is a Slenderverse blog from the early 2010s telling the story of a high school girl who goes by the name of Hosozukuri.Her passion is music,which she composes and posts in her blog along with her experiences of growing dread and disorientation as she becomes haunted by her own depression and other feelings of low self worth. After reading other Slenderblogs and thinking more about the world and mythos, her music begins to be inspired by other bloggers who are fighting against Slendy. A girl in a mask, who some readers say is a Hallow, begins to appear and taunt her. What is real and what is in Hosozukuri's mind become further and further blurred as she feels Slenderman compelling her to write a song full of dread and hopelessness, which she uses all her draining will and courage to resist.



While the narrative stands on its own, the real star of the blog is the original music, including a catchy "kids' song'' styled anthem to Slenderman called "Slendy's watching me'' whose lyrics, from the point of view of a child, paints the iconic monster as a misunderstood companion to children that "just wants to play." Seeing this whimsical song near the beginning of the blog entries and then following the descent into desperation and despair adds a certain poignancy to the journey, contrasted with the other compositions that range from disturbing and sadness to merciful solace and a fighting spirit. Recommended especially for those familiar and nostalgic for the early 2010s "golden age" of Slenderblogs.



Blogspot:
https://breezeinmonochromenight.blogspot.com

information and image selection by Lili Ardat

page design by G.P Reeds

BLUEBONNET

Bridging the gap between Analog Horror and Unfiction, this web series mirrors the classic pc games of the 90s and early 00s. Using this unique perspective, we are given glimpses into an epidemic of highly evolved, chameleon-like animals (called Screeps) that have adapted to perfectly replicate plant life...
Then animals...
And now, to the horror of many, humans...
What are their plans for humanity and where did this peculiar species come from?
As we search for answers, we come across a girl named Matilda, who seems to have no memory prior to her camping trip. Bringing "imposter syndrome" to all new levels, Matilda discovers that she has a replica outside of the woods.
Which one is real and which one is the Screep clone? Watch to find out!

Bluebonnet is mostly contained to the YouTube channel of the same name, but hidden clues can be found on the Tumblr page and website. There is also a second YouTube channel, but I'll leave that for you to find. Good luck and stay safe... The Screps are watching closely... Always.

YouTube Channel:
https://www.youtube.com/@MatildaaOlive475/

Website:
https://www.antiscreepwebsite.neocities.org

Tumblr:
https://www.tumblr.com/forestmeadows

information, image
selection and page design by
G.P Reeds

The Pendulum Swings Forth

The act of knowing something others do not is a rush of intellectual power few stimuli on this planet are able to achieve. It is on this foundation that we build many awe-inspiring creations. When abstracted, the quest for knowledge compels humanity to use it in beneficial ways. We start pushing forth against the void of unknowing. It's a rock in which we, as a medium, have latched ourselves to. It's the primary meta-relationship driving many of our stories: ("The creator knows something you don't. Are you seriously gonna stand for that? Nah, in a battle of wits, I'd win" the ARG veteran whispers to themself.) Left unchecked, however, we devolve into conspiracy. If we take the axiom of "knowing something others don't is potent motivation" seriously, what happens when somebody who does possess 'exclusive, ever present knowledge' is not able to achieve what they set out to conquer? The answer comes naturally: they do as they've always done, hypothesize a fantastical reason as to their continued suffering.

I'd like to talk to you about a book called 'Foucault's Pendulum.'

Written in 1988 by Umberto Eco, Foucault's Pendulum tells the story of the lives of three intellectuals living in Italy in the mid-1900s. Our main character, Casaubon, meets the other two while he is drafting his thesis on the Knights Templar, an oft-referenced occult group in the world of esotericism. One night at a bar, he meets Jacopo Belbo, an eccentric, snide editor for Garamond Publishing. Also an intellectual, Belbo asks Casaubon about the Templars, as they're a subject that comes up a lot in the thousands of books (of various artistic quality and integrity) he combs through at work. Belbo doesn't wish to learn about the Templars for wholesome reasons: he wishes to learn how to cut these fools down more efficiently. Diotavelli soon joins the two, a man obsessed with Kabbalist teachings, and holds a (dubious at best) claim to Judaic heritage.

Over the course of years, the three men become good friends, and coworkers at Garamond. After run-ins with a man claiming to have a secret Templar document detailing their plans (who mysteriously goes missing the day after), esoteric truth seekers and quacks and kooks of all sorts, the three men get tired of conspiracy. As a drunken gag, they start connecting every single occult society to each other with through lines. The Templars being a key part to "The Plan." Casaubon, Belbo, and Diotavelli hatch this plan to get their revenge on the "Diabolicals," occult-obsessed self financed authors that plague the press like locusts.

Although at first the three believe their Plan was a wholehearted success, eventually, through either their own follies or human nature, they realize this victory was Pyrrhic at best. Diotavelli comes down with cancer. Belbo is pursued by a secret society and strung up by the object of his obsession, which doesn't end well. And all Casaubon can do is watch. Wracked with guilt, Casaubon (and the reader) are left without resolution. Only time to think.

So, let's ruminate. Looking back at the overarching plot and characters through our unique lens of making ARGs, our discussion will center around Jacopo Belbo.As mentioned before, Belbo is an editor for Garamond. Aside from Casaubon, Belbo is the character we hear from the most. Not from direct dialogue, but from journal entries left behind on his computer, Abulafia.

In these entries, we are elucidated on Belbo's self-image. In the mirror he sees a harsh perfectionist who will always be a coward of the highest order. We know he finds meaning through writing…but Belbo continually expressed reservations about it. He feels has trapped himself in a corner: the eternal editor."Transforming books with a word here, a word there. Demiurge for the work of others. Tapping at the hardened clay, at the statue someone else has already carved. Instead of taking soft clay and molding my own. Give Moses the right tap with the hammer, and he'll talk"

Jacopo Belbo, 'Foucault's Pendulum', p.66

The question I'd like to pose is: Was Belbo forced into this pattern of thought by his environment, or did he back himself into it?

As Belbo continues through the story, he will have one-off asides for interesting books. But nearly every time, he will repeat:

"No. If I thought of it, somebody else must have already done it" (p.67)

Zooming out for a second, does this line of thinking feel—familiar to anybody else? This is a line of thinking I held in my first couple of years in the medium. That the most sublime part about a piece of art is the originality of the idea.

I worry a lot of amateur creators are preoccupying themselves with having "the most original idea" rather than "telling a story they can be proud of."

In this day and age, it feels if you aren't on the cutting edge, then you've been left in the dust.

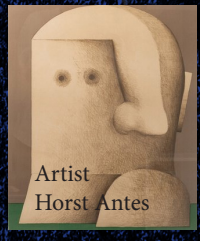
Must we really concern ourselves with originality, heady occult historical references, and a simulated thought experiment when we're still working out how to tell our stories effectively?

A quote by Pablo Picasso tends to make the rounds online from time to time: "Good artists copy, great artists steal"

The truth is, Belbo is right. All of these ideas have been thought of before. And yet at the same time, he reaches the wrong conclusion. "Why retread old paths?", he may say.

It's simple: no person walks down the same path the exact same way. The pace, gait, and stride vary from person to person. Even though we may all tell a story about the same thing, we will reach the end destination having taken two slightly different versions of the same route to get there.

Everyone has influences. Whether we like to admit it or not. To wholly detach ourselves from these symbols is impossible. It's like a booby-trap that still ensnares you when you know damn well that walking under a comically large net hanging from the ceiling is not the optimal path through the train station.



"Good artists copy, great artists steal."

Like a conspiracy that ensnares you even when you know it's bullshit. The idea, the general plot, the logline itself is not the test of originality and individualism. That lies within the execution. Belbo could write any of the books in his mind, and the ideas could be compared to others. This is just the nature of ideas. We don't find ideas, but ideas find us. What separates Belbo's story from others is how the tapestry of his life influences the stylistic choices made within his writing.

I see it all the time in creators of ARGs: they feel that to get any airwaves or runtime, their idea needs to be so complex and cutting edge that they spend their days trying to chase their perfect story. Especially for those whose ages skew closer to puberty than to when you can legally drink, it's tragic. Not every single story needs to operate on a razor's edge of logic and commentary.

Especially the first couple of games a creator makes. You don't need a grand Plan to enrapture the audience. You just need to execute in a way only you know how. If we go about your days existing here, in this weird creative niche that exists within the doldrums of the internet, to chase a grand Plan and gloss over the mundane and ordinary totally robs us of our true potential.

Ken Kirkpatrick wrote a rebuttal to, and review of, 'Foucault's Pendulum' in his 1995 paper titled "The Conspiracy of the Miscellaneous in Foucault's Pendulum". The paper itself talks about the perplexing issue that unfolds in the book, and notes that the subject of Eco's parody (conspiratorial analysis, and paranoiac interpretation of signs) is more interesting than the author's stance on said issues (that conspiratorial thinking undermines public discourse in many ways). When comparing the differences between differing lines of thought in the book towards the nature of Ardenti's secret Templar document, Kirkpatrick states the following on pages 2-3: 'A devotee of the occult might reject the commonplace interpretation out of hand as too mundane. A skeptic might accept it equally readily, for the skeptic is guided by what Eco calls "economy." Presented with a text, a "sane" interpreter searches for the context that provides for the easiest or most efficient interpretation.

In most cases, economy will favor the mundane interpretation, which appears to require the least belief. The occult interpretation, however, is often more appealing psychologically, satisfying a craving for a fullness or even an excess of meaning in the world. For some, the occult may also be more economical, because excess may be easier to believe than deficient meaning. Unlike either the skeptic or the occultist, the conspiracist would accept Lia's interpretation without rejecting the Plan, for what could be more subtle than to disguise the Plan as a delivery list? A conspiracist not only sees an excess of meaning, but also of design or strategy." As a medium, we skew towards favoring conspiracist interpretations because it's an easy choice. It's easy to leave threads hanging for the audience, hoping some player cooks up a theory that was a better story than the creator had planned. It allows for an audience who craves a search for meaning and secret information to nearly divine their own out of the ether.

But at what cost does it come? Yes, we harness paranoia and conspiratoria within our games. However, like the lower sephiroth, I argue we cannot keep this light contained. And thus, we allow darkness to creep in. As a community, we are stuck in a paranoiac phase. While we must remain vigilant and weed out those who encroach on our territory for diabolical purposes, I'm reminded of an old adage: "When all you have is a hammer, everything starts to look like a nail."

I'm not talking about anything in regards to "cancel culture". I'm talking about our need, as a community and as individuals, to hold the intellectual high ground. The insistence that "ARGs are better than any other form of media ever conceived" fucking reeks of "anime OSTs are the only valid genre of music, not any of that hip-h*p CRAP"-isms.

Imagine your wavering eyes stumble across ARGs as a concept for the first time. You're interested, so you start getting involved with the community. Scratching past the surface, EverymanHybrid, TSV, and Don't Feed the Muse satisfy something primal within you. An air of greed wafts through the air: You want, no. You NEED more.

You join Discords, you play ANY game you can, you might even be built differently and subscribe to an online zine dedicated to ARGs!

And through all the awesome creations you see, the attitudes of creators and players who are not hailed as Messiahs immediately sour. The creators themselves become toxic, blaming the Powers That Be as to their failures. And as they turn this rage outwards, so too does this rage turn inwards.

They hate everything about ARGs. They cannot stand their peers. To them, the success of anyone but themselves is not earned, but given on a silver platter. And I truly don't think that this feeling comes out of malice. It's a place of fear.

Belbo's second curse is that of being a coward. One who runs from conflicts instead of confronting them head-on. This ultimately seals his fate at the end of the book, with an ironic turn for the worse

Although we hold an incredibly awesome and potent power, we truly shouldn't run from making something mundane and average. As nerve wracking as it is putting your art out there for strangers to interact with and critique, there's a reason they confine themselves to the sidelines.

It's a harsh truth to realize: that we aren't going to be unique, and stand on the shoulders of giants. And even then, the meaning we ascribe to these giants is conspiratorial interpretation.

Although the path you tread may not be unique, you can still walk, sprint, or jog at your own pace. As hard as it is to deal with the notion of life not having an excess with meaning, it is a necessary step in creating your own meaning from this existence that seems to offer none of its own.

The path isn't unique. Many people have walked it before you, and exponentially more will walk it in the coming years.

But the branches you accidentally break, the flowers you choose to stop and take in, and the reason for climbing to the view belong to you, and only you.

I urge you, desperately, to stop limiting yourselves by copying. You are so much better than that. Be the cunning thieves I know you can be. Look the fear of not being in the "in-crowd" in the eyes and cut it to size with a brutality only you can manifest.

And, if I may add some personal advice, walk this path and remember just one mantra:

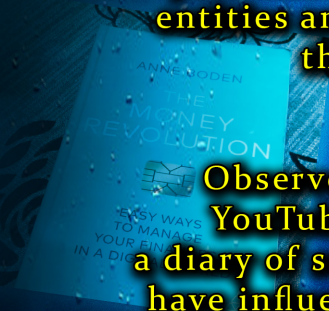
Not everybody is out to get you.

Written by Aaron Albright

IT'S ME JOHN COLAND

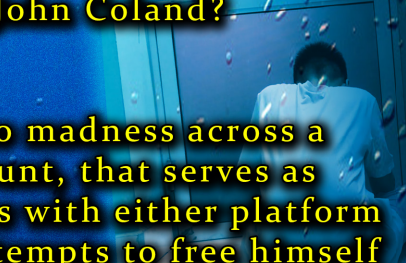
Inspired by the works of Hi I'm Mary Mary and various Slenderverse series, this unique plunge into the mind of a troubled teen will have you delving deep into your own psyche, as you piece together the events that have torn his mind and bound him in a Hell of his own creation. Are these "demons" that haunt John all in his mind or is something more sinister happening here? What did John do to hurt his friend Mary so badly?

Just what is Luciferium and how does it connect to these entities and the vines that have embedded themselves into the heart, body and mind of John Coland?



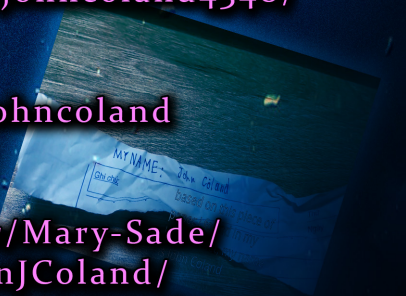
Observe as John Coland spirals into madness across a YouTube channel and Twitter account, that serves as a diary of sorts. Learn how interactions with either platform have influenced his course, as John attempts to free himself from the bonds of regret. The series has met its conclusion, but the posts serve as a roadmap and testiment of John's struggle and the march towards freedom.

More information on Luciferium and the core of the issue can be found spread across multiple Reddit accounts.



YouTube chanel:
http://www.youtube.com/@itsmejohncoland4348/

Twitter:
https://twitter.com/hiitsjohncoland



Reddits:
https://www.reddit.com/user/Mary-Sade/
www.reddit.com/user/JohnJColand/
www.reddit.com/user/deltaspirit123/

information, image
selection and page design by
G.P Reeds

THE SHORESIDE MIRAGES

The YouTube series THE SHORESIDE MIRAGES takes viewers on a wild ride beginning with some bizarre and unsettling concepts. Imagine you look across the ocean's horizon and there you see a...House? Furthermore, to the North is a whole neighborhood of Houses. They appear to be indestructible, except for maybe a window here and there. Or at least there are rumors of windows being broken with gunshots by those who hunt these floating Houses. Yes, there are "House clubs" since the 1930s that have sponsored seafaring hunting expeditions. Add in a cruise ship that disappeared (with nearly all souls onboard lost,) deadly-sharp wood chips that wash up on shore, cannibalism, lost media from Walt Disney that has been manipulated by these Houses, a CNN cover up, and that's just the half of it.

Using a split analog and digital horror motif mimicking the time it is set in (2011) THE.SHORESIDE MIRAGES explores the nature of truth, personal perception, government and media manipulation and supernatural interventions through animation, documentary style videos and live action. Although the sound design and visuals can sometimes be overly harsh sounding and looking with the distortion applied, what seems to be at first all over the place thematically and narratively falls neatly into place over time. Where the mysteries and mythology that are unfolding go next, though, is anyone's guess.

YouTube Channel:
https://www.youtube.com/@THESHORESIDEMIRAGES

information and image selection by Lili Ardat

page design by G.P Reeds

Article by
G.P Reeds

Blurring the lines between normal and paranormal are the 'demons' in which we face while traversing this mortal coil. Regardless of your path through life, troubles will come. They take many forms and vary in severity. Sometimes, they come in the form of anxiety, and sometimes they come in the form of depression. Oftentimes, they come as a mixed bag of both.

> "troubles will come. They take many forms and vary in severity."

Dealing with them can be hard, and healing from them can be much harder, as healing might not manifest in the form one would envision.

Try not to get overwhelmed though. Take a step back and try viewing things from a different angle. Perhaps, a more physical interpretation? This is where that line between normal and paranormal starts to blur as I mentioned previously.

'Hi I'm Mary Mary' opens to a strange predicament. A woman named Mary wakes up in a replica of her parents' home. She quickly realizes that she is alone here, and that all of the doors to the outside are locked and can't be unlocked. To add to this oddity, when browsing through social media, Mary again finds herself alone. It's as if the whole of humanity has vanished. Complete and total isolation on all fronts. Our window into this world also reflects this, as the comments are disabled for most of this series.

As night falls, the situation flips on its head. No longer is Mary alone, but she is visited by ghostly (and some altogether demonic) 'house guests' that disturb any chances at rest. From a shadowy figure that crawls up from under her bed, to a laughing masked figure in the mirror and a woman veiled in black.

Not only do these beings disturb her sleep, but as time progresses, they begin to verbally demean Mary more and more harshly. Her own behavior begins to parallel these 'house guests' as well. This starts as early as the second episode, in which Mary comments "What is so funny, is it my face?" in the video description. It's clear that these entities are somehow tied to Mary and her mental state, each mirroring the other.

As we progress into the fourth episode 'The Darkness Moves' we are introduced to a disembodied entity coined 'The Crawling Darkness' that eludes Mary (like a twisted game of tag) until she is at her very weakest and then it lashes out with vine-like tendrils, sinking in and devouring her suffering for sustenance.

"It's clear that these entities are somehow tied to Mary and her mental state"

Seeking out this entity, Mary states in the description of the video, "I found the source of the noise. I feel sick. I think I am going to be sick. I need to rest. I need to sleep. I've felt like I'm dying all morning now. I have to breathe slow and focus on something mindless." reflecting what the creature means in relation to her mental state.

The Crawling Darkness seems to be the literal 'root cause' of whatever trauma has trapped Mary in this place. It eludes her, just as the memory of why Mary is trapped here does. She wants to forget whatever said 'root' is, but just as The Crawling Darkness waits until she is at her weakest to attack, so too does the memory of whatever happened.

She buries herself in documenting what is happening to her and tweeting her thoughts, even though no one seems to be there to view her entries. As she said in the quote, "I have to breathe slow and focus on something mindless." Crutches and distractions. While these do seem to help at first, eventually the days become shorter (quite literally, by a considerable amount of time) and the troubling thoughts and entities return increasingly quick, and with more ferocity than the previous encounters.

This forces Mary to proceed further into herself, symbolized by the 'Garden.' The Garden is a peaceful, albeit lonely, forest with echoes of a previous life. Rusty cars, tunnels and other abandoned structures can be found here. Each seems to represent a subdued memory or memories. It's a safe space built from nostalgia.

Even here, however, the problems bleed through from the subconscious. Speaking of the subconscious, it too manifests as a being. A much less aggressive being known as 'The Lady In White' who silently warns Mary that she is doing more damage than good by residing here. It reminds her that she needs to resurface and get the help she needs.

"The Crawling Darkness seems to be the literal 'root cause' of whatever trauma has trapped Mary in this place."

While finding a coping mechanism is an important first step on the road to recovery, it won't be a permanent fix. One might distract themself with work or a hobby, or in more extreme cases a substance like alcohol or drugs, but a bandaid can only do so much. Sometimes the wound underneath will begin to fester if not treated properly. That is why it is so important to seek out mental help if you need it. You may feel alone like Mary, unable to communicate your problems or are afraid to, but you must find courage and do what it takes to heal.

You might find yourself pleasantly surprised by how understanding people can be. If not, it's still crucial for your own survival. I'm not a mental health expert, but I can say from experience that getting help is important. The Garden seems to correlate with Mary's online presence while in the house. People have started to appear on Twitter, encouraging Mary and offering condolences for her predicament. The comment section on YouTube has also been enabled. The parasocial relationships do help Mary quite a bit. She realizes that people do care and she's not as alone as she first thought—but it doesn't last. Mary starts to question if these people are real. When she does, the veiled monster is quick to jump on her doubt and masks the viewers from her, disabling comments once more and hiding all replies on Twitter. The demon relentlessly attacks Mary and reinforces the idea that no one cares about her.

"BUT YOU MUST FIND COURAGE AND DO WHAT IT TAKES TO HEAL."

The Crawling Darkness, now embedded in Mary's skin, causes her to start to decay from the inside out. She loses teeth and hair and quite literally begins to fall apart. The beings slip up, however, and the lies concerning the viewers subside. Hundreds of pings echo from Mary's computer as the notifications are restored.

Picking through the lies for truth, Mary realizes that ignoring the problem isn't helping her. Regardless of whether she wanted this or not, it's now a part of her. She can utilize this darkness, however, and use it to escape the depths of her mind. Then, and only then, can she truly start to heal.

"EMBEDDED IN MARY'S SKIN, CAUSES HER TO START TO DECAY FROM THE INSIDE OUT."

Images from
Hi, I'm Mary Mary

AURA AND HOOTIE COMICS

Written & Illustrated
by G.P Reeds

SEASON 2

Just before Hootie disappeared through the teleportation circle, he was attacked by a spider named Brandon. Brandon was the son of Aura's old friend, Marcus Spiderlegs. Aura squished Brandon to protect Hootie...

What have I done?!?

But in doing so, Aura became a murderer. He would do it again to protect his great nephew. Hootie a thousand times over. It's just too bad that doing so didn't save Hootie. He ended up with his other great uncle regardless.

I have to get out of here and fast!

No time to clean the floor...

or hide the body...

2 weeks Later

Mwaha ha ha!

Mwaha ha ha!

he he he!

he he he!

Traveling alone has been hard on Aura. He can only afford to stay in one place for a day at a time. Even then, there have been some suspicious glances at him.

EMERGENCY

He envies those with simple lives and simple minds

Mwaha ha ha!

he he he!

Aura misses many things, but most of all, he misses his dear great nephew Hootie.

click!

Aura holds hope, however.

Hope that he might be able to clear his name in the place where this all started.

THE PULLMAN COMPANY—Passenger's Check. To identify accommodations purchased.

BALTIMORE, Md.

TO NEW YORK N. Y.

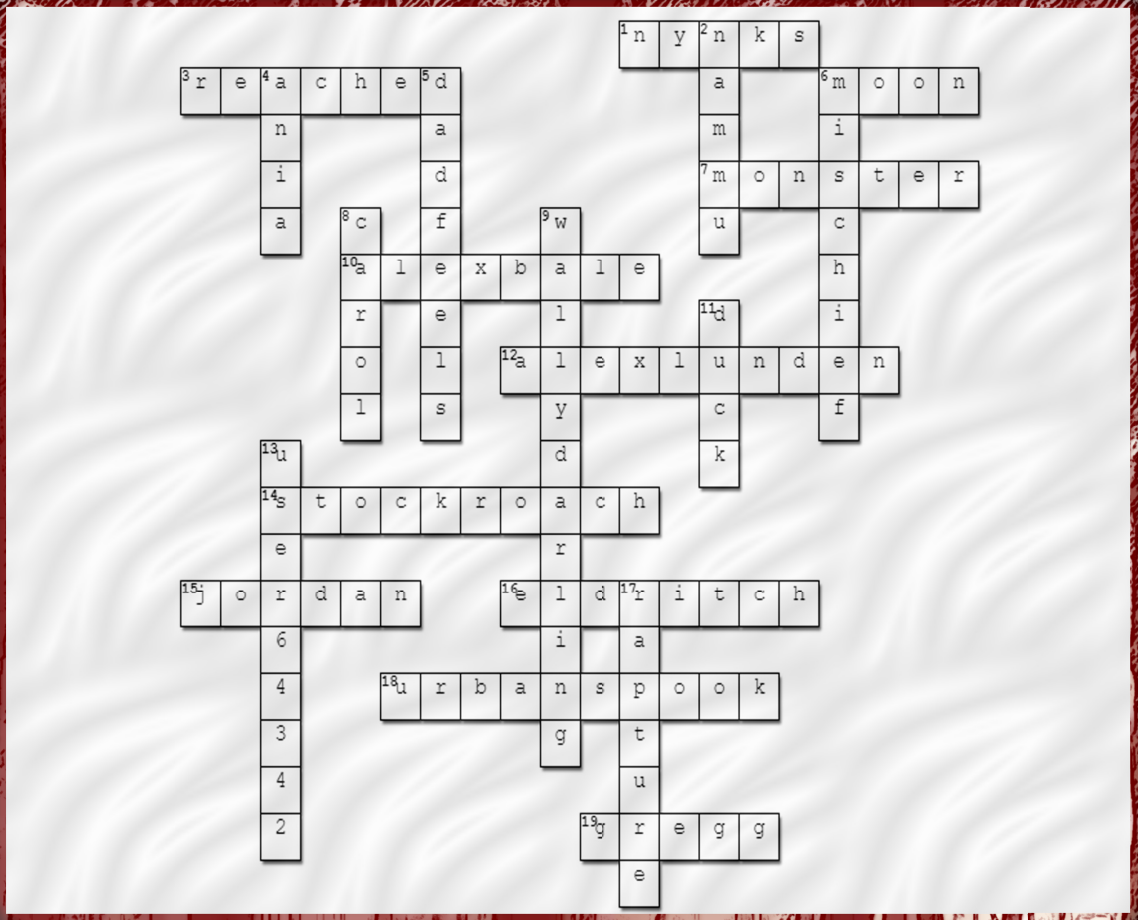
ACCOM. 2nd 9 CAR 241

Property taken into car will be entirely at owner's risk

11-11-A FORM 100-5

1 2 3 | 1533 PERSONS

ANSWERS FROM LAST ISSUE



Across

1. Contains a clown named Dottie (abbreviated) (**nynks**)
3. The World _____ (**reached**)
6. The opposite of what vanished in issue four of ARG Digest (**moon**)
7. Baphomet _____ 666 (**monster**)
10. He REALLY likes SpongeBob (**alexbale**)
12. Who in the hell is he? (**alexlunden**)
14. Who should you never take financial advice from? (**stockroach**)
15. Who was missing in Hiding In My Home? (**jordan**)
16. Last name of the man who wants your fears in issue one of ARG Digest (**eldritch**)
18. This series depicts gore on canvases using gore to paint (**urbanspook**)
19. What is the name of the main character in Project Earth? (**Gregg**)

Down

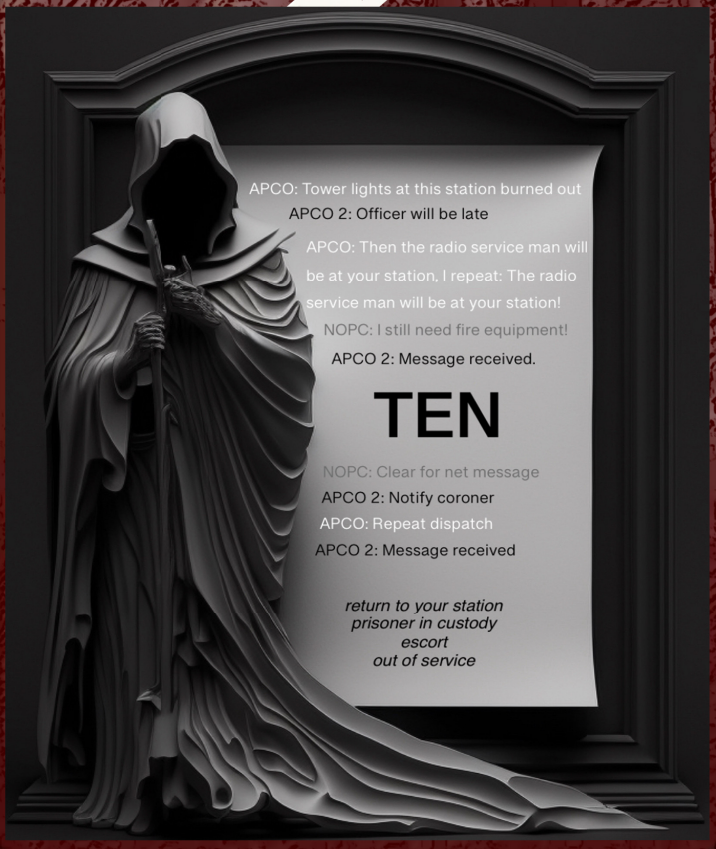
2. Who is the primary Goddess in Relived Eternally? (**nammu**)
4. The girl who went missing in issue three of ARG Digest (**ania**)
5. He's back with the milk (**dadfeels**)
6. He's always smiling on issue three of ARG Digest (**mischief**)
8. The main face of the man on the cover of issue 5 of ARG Digest (**carol**)
9. Home's favorite (**wallydarling**)
11. Red Guy, Yellow Guy (**duck**)
13. She likely has more masks than clothes in issue two of ARG Digest (**user64342**)
17. What is the player-given name of the girl in Rhee's Rapture? (**rapture**)

puzzle 1

puzzles created by MemoirsOfDeath

memoirsofdeath.wixsite.com/memoirs-of-death/?

puzzle 2



Want to submit a promo?

Here is some information on how.

Promotions can be either half a page or one page, with a maximum of a two page allowance. (there may be exceptions to this)
Promos are free to submit, but there is an option to commission a promo to be made. It costs $5 USD for half a page and $10 USD for one full page, with a maximum allowance of 2 pages (there may be exceptions to this).

The required dimensions are **8.625 inches in width and 11.25 inches in height**, with a printing resolution of **300-400 dpi** and pixels set at 3450 x 4500. You can email the graphic artist at **austererr@gmail.com**. Please upload the image on Google Drive.

Magazines are released bi-monthly. If you miss the submission date, your advertisement will be placed in the following magazine. In some cases, promos may be rejected, but you will be given a reason.

Promos do not have to be ARG exclusively; they can be **any indie media**. The ARG community is a mixed medium, and I welcome all creators to submit promos for their projects.
On the following page, I provide an example of where to place text in your promo. If you go outside the guide, **your promo will be resized and given a border.**

Example page

Keep Text in here

Must be 18+ to submit promo
or parental consent emailed
with the submission

Credits

CREATORS

Co-creator, lead writer, interviewer
Twitter: @GPReeds

Co-creator/founder
Graphic artist, magazine layout/construction
Contact info austererr@gmail.com

Writer, website design:

Lili Ardat
Twitter
@NabuMercury

Freelance writers:

Chandler Arndt
Twitter @chandlerarndt
Aaron Albright
Twitter @supremeyeetjpeg

Guest Writer:

Daisy Brown article
Neil Daigle Orians
https://www.instagram.com/neilmakesthings/
https://www.neilmakesthings.com/

Thank you to the Mods and Admins of Unfettered

Check out G.P. Reed's Discord server for more ARG and other indie series news.

Non-profit magazine developed by ARG creators to spread the genre and promote artists and their projects.